1: Rattray E, G-5 (ca. 1920) 1932
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Kusase

428 *Inheritance of Wife's Property*: All the property which a wife brings with her and everything she earns later at her husband's compound by her own individual labour—by brewing beer, making baskets and pots —on her death goes to her children. If she has no children her father's family will take it, not her husband.[1]

Son's Property: His brother takes it, including any wives. A father may not take a son's widow.

Rites de Passage:

787 844 846 *Birth*: When a woman conceives, we consult the soothsayer about it, to find out if she will be delivered easily. When she gives birth, we send a long piece of wood notched in three or four places (according to sex of child) to the woman's mother. The husband may take this himself, or, if he has other children, send it by one of them. This stick is cut through at one of the notches and used for firewood. Three or four days later, her mother will come to visit her daughter, bringing some *dawa dawa*. A woman takes care not to be confined inside a room. She will either go into the yard, or cattle-kraal, or to the *saman* farm. Leaves are spread on the ground for her to bring forth upon. The afterbirth (*zar*)[2] is buried in the compound farm in a pot and covered by another pot. The heads of mother and child are shaved on the day the navel string is cut. That of the child is thrown down in the fowl-house, that of the mother in the *saman* farm. The mother and child are bathed in warm water containing certain leaves. From these leaves the child gets its father's taboos. If a woman is confined in her mother's village, they would not dare to bathe the infant in their medicine. They would send a messenger to her husband, who would then dispatch some one with his medicine to treat his wife properly. Neither the father nor any other male will see the child until its navel string is healed up. When it finally drops off, it is buried where the afterbirth was put. A child is not taken outside until it becomes black, but as soon as the mother is better she may go out and fetch water as usual. Sometimes a soothsayer may say that an infant must be taken outside for the first time by such and such a person. This woman must be a *poato* (i.e. a woman born in the infant's father's town, a clanswoman). Five to six months after birth,

[1] Among the Nankanse, what a woman earns while living with her husband belongs to him. Her private property, however, which she brought with her, belongs to her daughter.

[2] In Nankane, the afterbirth of animals is called *zale*, that of human beings *yala*.

3: Fortes E-5 (1934-1937) 1949
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and watched over by his ancestors. If she or the child dies in childbirth the responsibility falls on her husband. A child should be born under its father's roof, literally into the lineage to which it comes as a profit (*ŋoor*) and a responsibility, and under the auspices of its patrilineal ancestors, the spiritual arbiters of its destiny, to whom it will later in life bring sacrifices. Its life will depend on these ancestors, one of whom will immediately demand to be made its spiritual guardian, charged with preserving its life (*mar u ŋɔvɔr*).

Not only should a child be born under its father's roof, but it should, ideally, be reared, or at least be brought through the first dangerous months of infancy, in its father's house. Circumstances occasionally compel a child to be entrusted to the care of its mother's family, and the Tallensi are practical enough to accept this necessity with equanimity. But they are extremely reluctant to let a young infant pass out of the direct tutelage of its paternal kin and ancestors even for a short while. Thus strong objection is raised if a young wife takes her infant and goes to stay at her parents' house for some time. Here, again, practical necessity may leave no alternative, but there is always a feeling of uneasiness, as can be seen from the following case. When Nindɔyat of Zubiuŋ̃ died, his youngest wife went home to her father's house at Tɔŋ-Seug, about a quarter of a mile from her late husband's house, taking her infant of some six months with her. Nindɔyat's brother and prospective heir tried to prevent her going, but she was not well, and they had to admit that she would be better cared for by her mother than by her co-wives. So they allowed her to go. A couple of weeks later, however, the baby fell ill, and though the young mother was staying only a few minutes' walk from her late husband's house, she returned to it immediately. 'She came running back home', her late husband's brother told me, 'because the child was ill. Its (dead) father had not agreed for it to be taken away (that is, the dead father, now a spirit, had mystically caused the child's illness as a sign of his displeasure). And supposing the child were to die at its maternal uncle's house? Should we not say that they had caused the death of our child?' The proper ritual measures to cure the child, without which practical leechcraft could not avail, could only be taken by its father or his representative in its father's house. The young mother believed this as firmly as her late husband's heir.

For all these reasons it is a taboo (*kiŋɔr*) for a child to be born in its mother's father's house. His ancestor spirits cannot watch over mother and child, for they do not 'own (*so*)' the child. It is, therefore, dangerous for the child's health and chances of survival. Of course, such a thing may, and sometimes does happen by accident. Then the child's father must, whenever he can afford it, erase the pollution by the ceremony of 'removing the blood (*vaa ziem*)' of the birth from his father-in-law's house. He sends a sheep and beer to his father-in-law as a placation

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gift. Accepting the gift, the old man calls on his ancestors to bless his son-in-law and to forgive the offence. The beer is drunk by the elders of the father-in-law's clan segment. This ceremony should be performed before the child is old enough to visit its maternal grandparents. For if the child visits its mother's father's house before the pollution is erased and sets eyes—as inevitably it must—on the midden heap, where its placenta is buried, it will die. Instances are known of men who, defying convention and the ancestor spirits, have taken daughters from their husbands, owing to non-payment of bride-price, just before they were due to bear. Decent folk regard such behaviour as little short of monstrous, for it places mother and child in great danger, bereft as they are of the care and spiritual guardianship of the child's paternal kin and ancestors. It is for this reason, Tallensi say, that it is a taboo to demand a girl's bride-price while she is pregnant. Many a man wins a respite from his father-in-law's importunity on account of his wife's pregnancy.

The Significance of Maternal Parentage and the Uterine Line

The Tallensi, as we have seen, insist on the equal importance of both parents in the procreation of a child. Though patrilineal descent is overwhelmingly dominant in the jural, economic, and ritual constitution of Tale society, it would be surprising if maternal origin had no institutional function in Tale social organization and ideology. In fact, as has been shown in our analysis of the lineage system,[1] the two principles of patrilineal descent and maternal origin always work together. The two ideas are inseparable in native thought and run like a cry and its echo through the whole social structure. Whenever I have discussed these matters with informants they have generally begun by enumerating all the things that make 'paternal parentage (*ba dɔŋam*)' the most important fact of one's life, and have usually concluded by pointing out that, of course, 'maternal parentage (*ma dɔŋam*)' is also of the greatest importance, though in a different way.

One indication of the sociological significance of maternal origin is the quality of the bond between mother's brother (*ahəb*) and sister's son (*ahəŋ*), either of the first degree or in a classificatory sense.[2] A person's own maternal uncle and maternal grandfather (*yaab*), and their inner lineage (*dug*), impinge directly and frequently on his life. The maternal uncle's home is a person's second home. He has a quasi-filial status there; and in addition to close bonds of sentiment with his uncle and his uncle's close kin, he has specific ceremonial rights and duties in relation to them. Though he has no property, succession, or inheritance rights in his uncle's home, a man has special material privileges there, which give expression to the notion of his quasi-filial status. They show that he is equated with a son in sentiment while

[1] See *Dynamics of Clanship*, ch. iii.
[2] Cf. ch. xi, below.

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expect not only to be well fed, but also to be well entertained. They expect their stay to be made pleasant by dancing, feasting, and flirtations with unmarried girls of the host's clan, and many marriages come about as the result of such contacts. Young men going on such parties are more likely to grouse at their treatment if there were not enough girls to flirt with than if they were stingily fed. But it would be a gross breach of hospitality, as well as an irreparable wrong, if any of the visitors seduced any of the girls; and the son-in-law and his wife always sleep in separate rooms.

These parties are extremely common. Towards the end of the dry season, when house-building is in progress, or in the latter half of the rainy season, when hoeing is very active, there are weeks during which a visiting party of in-laws can be found in a large settlement almost every day. Yet the sexual taboos we have mentioned are rarely broken. I was told of a few alleged cases that had occurred. But the only well-authenticated case I heard of was during my second visit to Taleland, when it came up in connexion with a court case over the woman who was concerned. The scorn and disgust with which people spoke of these cases showed how strongly the natives feel about these taboos.

The taboo against a woman's bearing her husband's child in her father's house links on to this complex of ideas. It is also a 'pollution of the room' of the father-in-law, and a very serious matter. For, as we have previously mentioned, it puts the child thus born into an anomalous position which is dangerous to his welfare. But a breach of it happens so often by accident that it does not inspire repugnance. The pollution can easily be removed by the husband's sending a placatory gift, as we have already recorded, to his father-in-law to 'clear away the blood (*vaa ziem*)' of the delivery. At the same time Tallensi do not like this to happen, and a woman near her term is not encouraged to visit her parents. I have known a man to be so angry with a wife who disobediently went to her father's house towards the end of her pregnancy and gave birth there that he refused at first to have her back.

A man also pollutes his father-in-law's room if he vomits (*ti*) in his father-in-law's house. It is unlucky. The son-in-law and his wife 'will not have it well (*ku nye ɔmma*) with them'; but amends can be made in the same way as for the birth of a child in the father-in-law's house. The symbolism is obscure and the natives cannot explain it. Vomiting is normally taken as a symptom of illness. It may be that they feel vomiting in such circumstances to be a sign of rejecting the hospitality of parents-in-law and therefore a sign of inner hostility to them. The context of this taboo suggests, however, that vomiting in a father-in-law's house is connected with the bearing of a child there, the symbolism being taken either from morning sickness or arising indirectly through the association of regurgitated food with the fluids discharged in childbirth.

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602 843 the family keep an eye on the girl lest she overstrain herself or break one of the dietary taboos. If his father is alive it is he who visits diviners and appeals to the ancestors.

The woman's paternal family, too, are concerned, especially in a first pregnancy. When they have been informed of it, her father appeals to his ancestors to bless her in her coming ordeal, and her mother and sisters bring her gifts of firewood, as her time approaches. It is also her mother's duty, round about the fourth or fifth month, to send one of [292] her co-wives to 'gird the girl with a perineal band (*suol u voog*)', the garb of a matron; for until she has a child a woman wears no genital covering.

The prohibition against giving or accepting bride-price during a woman's pregnancy expresses this general solicitude too. Bride-price transactions involve tension and possible conflict between her father's people and her husband's; and this is not only distressing to her but dangerous to the unborn child. If, for instance, her father, defying convention and the ancestor spirits, as some men are heartless enough to do, takes her from her husband because the bride-price is not paid, the child's legitimate paternity may be prejudiced, as we have noted before, and its health suffer, or the woman herself have a difficult labour.

843 The solicitude for a woman with child reaches its peak at her confinement and during the subsequent three or four weeks, until she has 844 regained her strength and resumes her normal activities. Many men 846 have described to me their feelings in the hour of a wife's labour. 'You sit listening to her cries and groans of agony. You can't sleep. Your heart is clenched with fear and pity. You do not know how it will end. Do not women die in childbirth or become ill? Do not children die or get injured at birth?' A man's relief and happiness when his wife has passed safely (*salɔg*) through her confinement is written plainly in his voice and gait. Zaŋ, one of the most morose men I have known, was all smiles and affability on the morning after his wife's confinement. [777] When friends and neighbours congratulate a man on his good luck (*zusɔŋ*, lit. good head) it is as much on account of his wife's safety as on the child's arrival.

846 During the days of seclusion—three for a boy and four for a girl—and for the next week or so, it is the husband's duty to provide sustaining food and appetizing condiments for his wife. He will go out to fetch large logs for the fire that must be kept going day and night in the woman's room while she and the babe are still weak and liable to catch cold. Every morning he will go out or send someone to collect the leaves and herbs to infuse in the hot water with which mother and child are bathed. And if necessary he will himself carry water from the water-hole or do other services for her comfort that men usually consider to be beneath their dignity.

846 602 A confinement also involves extra labour and the dislocation of routine for the womenfolk of the husband's family. The care of the woman and

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843 For a woman too, and for any native who is looking at it from the point of view of motherhood, the difficulties of bringing a child into the
● 844 world centre round pregnancy and labour. Tale women generally seem to take a pregnancy in their stride, especially later pregnancies. They go on with their household tasks until the last minute. Children are sometimes born in the bush, and quite often born outside on the home farm, where the mother has been busy with some task. Miscarriages due to the strain of heavy work such as fetching heavy loads of firewood or going to distant markets to buy grain by the sack, and bringing it home by head carriage are not uncommon among multiparae. Primiparae, as we have seen, are usually watched over by older women, but miscarriages due to overstrain occur among them too. A woman who has had a child is trusted to look after herself.

843 But in spite of their apparently casual attitude to it, women think of pregnancy as fraught with weariness, discomfort, and anxiety. A woman thinks of the purely physiological discomforts such as the attacks of sickness and giddiness she may suffer. She thinks of the circumspection she must use in her eating and drinking. Very thin gruel, cold left-over porridge, sweet potatoes, too much cold water, are all things which would injure her health and must be avoided; nor may she eat honey, else her babe will be born with a catarrhal snuffle. A woman thinks, also, of the increasing lassitude that makes her household tasks more and more burdensome as her term approaches. She remembers the store of firewood she must gather and the provisions she must lay in for her confinement, though it is hard enough to satisfy the current needs of the household. And at the back of her mind she has always the fear of a miscarriage. She is subject, also, to ritual taboos, the most important being the avoidance of funerals.

844 Then, of course, there is the act of giving birth (*dɔɣ*) in the narrow sense. Tale women do not think of it in anticipation with terror or repugnance, but they do associate it with pain and possible complications. The crude midwifery of the old women who assist at a birth, relying in part on magical measures, cannot correct a breech presentation (*tula*) or expel an undescended placenta.

846 Women always put particular emphasis on the agonies of the hygiene of confinement. Mother and child are subjected to a course of hot baths, douching, and massage which the natives say is extremely painful. A white onlooker finds the process harrowing, to say the least. Water heated to nearly boiling-point is used and medicinal leaves and herbs are infused in it. The infant goes rigid with pain when it is washed in this decoction, and the mother squirms and shrieks as it is sluiced over her body and still tender sexual parts. Massage and oiling with shea butter follow the bath. The treatment is given twice or thrice daily during the days of seclusion and is gradually reduced over the following two or three weeks, fewer baths being given and the temperature of the